1776

A

Seaſonable Addreſs

TO THE

More SERIOUS PART of the

Inhabitants of *Great-Britain*,

RESPECTING THE

Unhappy Conteſt between *us* and our *American* Brethren:

With an occaſional Word interſperſed to *thoſe* of a different Complexion.

By a LOVER of PEACE.

—*He beheld the City and wept over it.*—Luke xix. 41.

Let your Moderation be known unto all Men.—
Phil. iv. 5.

BRISTOL:

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A *Seaſonable* ADDRESS

TO THE

More SERIOUS PART of the

Inhabitants of *Great-Britain*, &c.

MEN and BRETHREN,

UNHAPPY! very unhappy for us, we are a kingdom divided againſt itſelf; and without a miracle, fall we muſt! What a fall will there then be, when ſuch *diſtreſs is upon the land and wrath upon the people!* And is this a little thing brethren? Is it what any of us either deſire or promote? God forbid! A kingdom divided againſt itſelf is an evil, of all others, the moſt dreadful; inaſmuch as an innumerable train of evils neceſſarily follow. No inconſiderable part of which are the ſword, fire, plunder, and

famine. This our forefathers unhappily felt, and to our inexpreſſible ſorrow we may feel.

And is this an unlikely thing? Is it altogether improbable? Surely no! But that ſmall cloud which aroſe ſome few years ſince, has (to diſcerning minds) been gathering blackneſs and ſpreading itſelf well nigh over the whole land. And is it any marvel if, by and by, it ſhould burſt upon us, as it has done upon America. Let him that has wiſdom underſtand this.

Then who that has any underſtanding, any bowels of mercy and compaſſion, would not do the utmoſt, that either human or divine prudence can ſuggeſt, to prevent it. For who knows, when the ſword is once drawn, where it may ſtop! Who can command it to be put up into its ſcabbard, and it will obey him? Such power is not in man. It is only in him "who rides upon the ſtormy ſky, and calms the roaring ſeas." Again, if the ſword ſhould be drawn, upon whom may it light? This we know not. But ſuppoſing it ſhould be on yourſelf, or a beloved wife, an aged parent, a tender child, a dear relative, what recompence can be found for ſuch a loſs? What! oh! What would the whole world then be, if it might be gained? Alas! what a poor trifle! But ſuppoſe you eſcape with your life, and the lives of thoſe that are near and dear to you; there is yet another dreadful evil to fear, and which has been the caſe. Plunder! lawleſs plunder may deprive you of your little all. Now who can inſure another? Who can exempt himſelf in the time of general diſtreſs, from ſuch an evil. Alas! brethren, *we*

muſt

muſt let this alone for ever. We are of yeſterday and know nothing of to-morrow.

What then muſt we do to ſave (not to deſtroy) our kingdom, and to ſave (not to deſtroy) our American brethren? Do! my brethren! Why! what would we do, if either our own or our neighbour's houſe were on fire. We ſhould bring (if in our ſenſes) no combuſtible matter to encreaſe the flame, but water and a helping-hand to extinguiſh it. This we ſhould certainly do, and our labour would not be in vain. Now apply this to America and Great-Britain. The former is like an houſe on fire; the devouring flames of an unnatural, civil war are already kindled, and ſome hundreds of lives have fallen a prey to its inſatiable violence. And how long, before this may be our cauſe here, God only knows!

Stop here then my brethren and ſurvey the deſolation. Behold the weeping and diſconſolate widow refuſing to be comforted. Her beloved huſband is fallen! is fallen! and is no more. See the affectionate parent hanging down his head like the bullruſh. Hear the broken language of his heart. My ſon! My ſon! would God, I had died in thy place. Oh! my ſon, my ſon! This is far from the flight of imagination, or the colouring of fancy. It is the real and actual condition of many amongſt that unhappy people, and a part only of their manifold diſtreſs. In a word, they and we appear to be a people, infatuated like the Jews of old, and ripening for deſtruction: and no marvel if, while we are biting and devouring one another,

ſome ſtronger beaſts of prey ſtep in and divide the ſpoil! Here ſtop then and drop a tear for the ſlain of our people, through the fire of contention that is kindled amongſt them! And if on your recovery from the horrors of ſo terrible a conflagration, you ſhould begin to enquire into its cauſe, a ſpectator begs leave to inform you, that it was occaſioned through the unhappy contention of brethren, (which as Solomon obſerves, *only cometh of pride*,) and begs your kind aſſiſtance to extinguiſh the flames, leſt they and their whole ſubſtance ſhould be conſumed together! The great danger of which as well as the cauſe, of this unparalleled and fatal ſtrife, I would beg leave to preſent to your view in a piece of fine painting, done by an abler maſter. " See! Here are ſome thouſands of our brave countrymen gathered together on this plain—they are followed by the moſt tender and feeling emotions of wives, children, and an innumerable multitude of their thoughtful, humane and ſympathizing countrymen. Then turn your eyes and behold a ſuperior number at a little diſtance, of their brethren, *fleſh of their fleſh, and bone of their bone*, who only a few years ſince emigrated to the dreary wilds of America.—Theſe alſo are followed with the moſt tender feelings of wives, children, and countrymen.—See! they advance towards each other well prepared with every inſtrument of death. But what are they going to do? To ſhoot each other through the head or heart, to ſtab and butcher each other, and haſten ('tis to be fear'd) one another into the everlaſting burnings. Why ſo? What harm have they done to one another? Why! none at all. Moſt of them are entire ſtrangers to each other.

other. But a matter is in diſpute relative to the mode of taxation. So theſe countrymen, children of the ſame parents, are to murder each other with all poſſible haſte, to prove who is in the right. Now what an argument is this! What a method of proof! what an amazing way of deciding controverſies! But ſo it is, and oh! what horrors attend on it? At what a price is the deciſion made? By the blood and wounds of thouſands; the burning cities, ravaging and laying waſte the country." Now, who that ſeriouſly conſiders this awful conteſt, can help lamenting the aſtoniſhing want of wiſdom in our brethren to decide the matter without bloodſhed! What, are there no wiſe-men amongſt us? None that are able to judge between brethren? But brother goeth to war againſt brother; and that in the very ſight of the Heathen. Surely this is a ſore evil amongſt us! Oh! how are the mighty fallen. How is wiſdom periſhed from the wiſe! What a flood of folly and madneſs has broke in upon us!

But do you farther aſk me who was firſt in the tranſgreſſion? Who began the dreadful ſtrife? I muſt beg your pardon for not touching this ſubject now. Excuſe my ſaying any thing of the *ſecond* cauſe, as I mean only to enquire into the *firſt*. I fear doing harm, and this is far from my deſign. Another great reaſon for my avoiding any reflections of this ſort, on this delicate ſubject is, that it has been already done by ſome of the moſt able hands, and to very little purpoſe. Argument ſeems loſt in clamour, in confuſion of paſſion and party rage: and the ſatanic duſt of prejudice ſeems to have put out the eyes of

of our underſtanding. But thus much I might venture to ſay, the caſe is rendered very complicated, and muſt in general remain unintelligible, unleſs to thoſe who thoroughly underſtand the conſtitution of each party, and then have wiſdom enough to weigh it in an unprejudiced balance.

To be plain, the preſent melancholy diſpute either is, or is not founded in a conſtitutional right on the one part; and a conſtitutional oppoſition on the other. So far is certain. Therefore till the *entire* nature of both conſtitutions are well and fully underſtood, it is utterly impoſſible to decide thereon. I ſpeak as to the matter of the diſpute only; the manner of it is another point. Now how many underſtand, or ever properly conſider, either the one or the other? I fear but few. How deplorable then is it, that almoſt every one is ſufficient for it, and accordingly paſſes ſentence. An outcry is raiſed. The Americans ſhould or ſhould not be taxed, and many have drawn their ſwords, and are well nigh ready to cut their antagoniſt's throats! But this is not our wiſdom, it is far from it. It is indeed fighting uncertainly, and ſcattering firebrands, arrows and death. But go no farther. Stop here! and calmly reflect on the above argument. Settle it in your heart, that unleſs you properly underſtand the merits of the cauſe, you talk at random. You argue uncertainly, and worſe than to no purpoſe.

But if any man has this wiſdom, and this well-poiſed balance, let him ſtand forth in defence of his

his country, and be aſſured his labour will not be in vain.

Here we muſt lament that, inſtead of its being a matter of great and general concern, it is more a party affair; and to our ſhame it may be ſaid, that ſuch a ſpirit has ſo unhappily influenced almoſt all ſorts of people, that ſome are breathing out ſlaughter againſt one party, and ſome againſt another. Now while this is the caſe, is it any marvel that we ſhould periſh together? While we are contending who ſet the building on fire, and looking with rage and vengeance on the ſuſpected party, inſtead of bringing the aſſuaging water of heart-felt grief and pious concern, with the helping-hand of wiſdom, moderation and love; it is more than certain the flames will ſpread and endanger the whole building.

If theſe things therefore are ſo, let us ceaſe contending with each other. Let us avoid unkind and bitter reflection on one another, ſeeing it can do no real ſervice to the cauſe we would defend; but, in all probability, much harm. Let us bring no combuſtible matter of this ſort to increaſe the fire. But as the flames are actually ſpreading and may ſoon reach from them to us, let us do our utmoſt to extinguiſh them. Ye ſalt of the earth! exert the ſeaſoning, preſerving quality which you are favoured with. Bring your contentious brethren in your loving arms of faith and prayer, and lay them at your Father's feet, praying him *to forgive them as they know not what they do.* Look upwards for help, to him *who doth whatſoever pleaſes him in the armies of heaven, and amongſt the ſons of men:*

knowing

knowing it is he alone that *can quench the violence of fire, ſtill the raging of the ſea, and the madneſs of the people.* Much, brethren, depends on you, though *the world account your life madneſs, and your end to be without honour*; for *you* are the true *ſalt of the earth*; you *alone* preſerve it from general putrefaction; and *you*, under God, are the great means of ſaving a divided kingdom, *a people laden with iniquity, a ſeed of evil doers:* and had not the Lord *left you as a ſmall remnant*, we ſhould long ſince *have been as Sodom and Gomorrah!*

But do not you, for your Maſter's ſake, loſe your favour in that unhallowed fire of contention, which the people who know not God, are now burning in. The old ſerpent may herein deceive us, as he has too often done already. As an angel of light he is moſt likely to ſucceed, and, under the ſpecious ſhew of doing our country ſervice betray us, in treating our opponents, into a ſpirit and temper not from above. And how many may unhappily be influenced and led away with our error, God only knows! But this ſeems to be the deſign of the adverſary of God and man; and if he can ſet the Chriſtian world together by the ears, he has gained his point. But again brethren, we may be deceived reſpecting the cauſe itſelf. Our veneration and reſpect for the cauſe we would eſpouſe, may betray us into a maze of error, imprudence, falſe zeal and bitterneſs of temper; which muſt prove highly injurious to the public good. What has been, you know, may be again. And as the great Governor of the world has often permitted, particularly upon his own people,

ple, a judicial blindneſs, hardneſs of heart, and an amazing infatuation, which terminated in their ruin; ſo it is not improbable but the great and ſpreading defection and intemperate zeal on the one hand, and the determined purpoſe of maintaining the authority and dignity of government, by fire and ſword, on the other is, more judicial than we are aware of. And that this is the caſe, I fear, is more than probable. It has been ſo in this kingdom, as well as the kingdom of Iſrael in the matter of David and his ſon Abſalom; and it will be ſo while iniquity beareth rule. If this be ſo, Take heed what you do. Do nothing haſtily or raſhly. But rather, before you touch this awfully delicate ſubject, and enter the liſts, examine and weigh well the thoughts of your heart, and the ſprings of motion. And with David pray, *Search me O God, and prove the ground of my heart*, &c. Beg to be directed. If you can't act from a full perſuaſion that this is required at your hands; and if you can't ſee the divine cloud go before you, deſiſt in time. Let the dead bury their dead. But let not thoſe who were deſigned to ſave the earth, deſtroy it. Let not Chriſtians engage in the controverſy, in the ſpirit and temper of the world, and bite and devour one another, leſt they ſhould be conſumed with the world. But rather let them wiſh with an eminent prophet (an admirable way of ſhewing our love to our country, and doing it the moſt effectual ſervice!) *Oh! that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the ſlain of the daughter of my people.* And with Chriſt himſelf, the inſpirer of the

the prophets, *when he beheld the* rebellious *city*, WEEP OVER IT!

But, it may be, you are of a different complexion. You *fear not the Lord, neither regard the operation of his hands.* Your caſe, I fear, is too ſimilar to his, who of old ſaid, *Who is the Lord that I ſhould obey him?* But *he is*, though you know him not, *the God of your life, your health, your ſtrength, and all your mercies.* It is *through him you live, move and have your being*; *and* is therefore altogether worthy of all you have and all you are. *Acquaint yourſelf with him and be at peace; and thereby good ſhall come unto thee.* 'Till this is the caſe, it is morally impoſſible that you ſhould be a true patriot, a real lover of your country. You may indeed aſſume the ſounding title: but it is an empty name. You may in word mightily contend for your country's good; but while you are a ſlave to ſin, you are an enemy to God and your country too. But let the time paſt ſuffice. Be henceforth, not only in word, but in deed and in truth, a patriot. Put away the accurſed thing, the evil that is found in you; ſo ſhall you love your country as your own ſoul and prevent the fearful end of both.

That we may do this, and that it may pleaſe infinite wiſdom to ſucceed our attempts, I would beg leave to paſs from the ſecond to the firſt cauſe. Here I would fix my foot, as on a ſure and ſolid foundation, that will ſtand for ever! The holy ſcriptures give us ample accounts of the fall and riſe of the greateſt monarchies. It is ſimply this. They roſe by virtue; but they fell by vice. *Righte-*

ouſneſs

ouſneſs alone *exalteth a nation*; *but ſin is a reproach to any people*. And this ever will be the caſe, till the end of all things. So much in general is certain; but *wherein* we have well nigh filled up *the meaſure of our iniquity*, and may therefore expect their fate, is another point. But it is certain that iniquity of every kind, and amongſt all ranks and orders of men, has and does abound: and as we are puniſhed with the ſword, it is not improbable, but one principal ſin of our nation is, the blood that we have ſhed in *Aſia*, *Africa*, and *America*. Here I would beg your ſerious attention, while I obſerve, that however extenſively purſued, and of long continuance the African trade may be, it is nevertheleſs iniquitous from firſt to laſt. It is the price of blood! It is a trade of blood! and has ſtain'd our land with blood. And is the Eaſt-India trade a jot better? I fear not. They ſeem very nearly allied. For though here is no leading into captivity, as in the former; yet the refined iniquity practiſed there, of fomenting war amongſt the natives, and ſeizing the chief of the plunder, has been as conſpicuous to the ſerious and attentive. What millions have fallen by theſe means, as well as by artificial famine! Oh! earth cover not thou their blood! It will ſpeak to heaven and to the inhabitants of the earth to the lateſt poſterity. Oh! ye governors of this great nation, would to God that ye had ſeen this, and timely done your utmoſt to ſeparate thoſe tares from the wheat of fair and honeſt trade! What peace therefore can we expect, while theſe evils continue! *There can be no peace ſaith the Lord.* While *the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground, What haſt thou*

to do with peace? Shall I not viſit for theſe things; ſhall not my ſoul be avenged on ſuch a nation as this! Yes my brethren, we have much reaſon to fear and tremble as upon the brink of fate.

But there is (if ought can be worſe) a ſorer evil, namely an aſtoniſhing contempt and neglect of *truly* ſacred things; eſpecially the ſolemn worſhip of Almighty God: and herein our nobility and gentry, almoſt univerſally diſtinguiſh themſelves. This is indeed a ſore evil, one of the groſſeſt affronts that can be offered to the Great Governor of the world. And I am bold to ſay, that as he hath ſpoken to this nation as he hath not to any other nation upon earth of late years, and that in an uncommon way and manner, but as in general, we have ſtopped our ears, and utterly deſpiſed his call; the day will come when the candleſtick will be removed, and the kingdom of God given to another people that will attend the call, and bring forth fruit. And when the divine glory, in this reſpect, begins to depart, the natural glory will ſoon follow. Probably that day is not far off, unleſs we repent.

We ſeem indeed to have been at our meridian height of power, greatneſs, &c. (not of holineſs unto the Lord) and 'tis to be feared that the glory has begun to depart, which like the ſun, when he begins to decline, will continue its declenſion, finally diſappear, and leave us in total darkneſs, unleſs a divine interpoſition prevent. For we ſeem judicially given up to purſue thoſe meaſures that will effectually accompliſh it. Now as what God hath joind together (eſpecially ſuch powerful people as we and the Americans *now* are)

are) for the mutual ſupport, comfort and defence of each other, ſhould not be put aſunder, by any means whatſoever, as it would undoubtedly fruſtrate his gracious deſign in this well-compacted body; ſo if one powerful member ſhould riſe up againſt the whole body, or the whole body againſt one ſuch member, and diſunite from it; this ſchiſm muſt in the nature of things occaſion ſuch a weakneſs and deformity in the whole body, as is only to be known by an unhappy experience. The diſunion of the ten tribes is a melancholy proof of it. And as Judah vexed Ephraim, and Ephraim Judah, ſo will it be with us. The counſel therefore to ſeparate, cannot be from God. It has no foundation in the nature and fitneſs of things beneficial, either to them or us, and muſt in the end prove like the counſel of Ahitophel.

Ye friends of America, turn your eyes therefore for a moment, from thoſe you ſuſpect to be the only authors of the preſent evil, and think ſeriouſly of a more ſecret, but certain cauſe, namely the *univerſality* and *enormity* of every ſpecies of wickedneſs that is found in our land; and then marvel not that the Great Governor of the world hath with-held that reſtraint, which he is ever wont to hold, amongſt the governors of a wiſe and good people. For we may be aſſured of this, that were thoſe in authority under the temptation of deſpotiſm and oppreſſion, (and would to God, it never was the caſe!) if we *as a people*, by our tranſgreſſions, had not to a great and certain degree provoked the eyes of his glory. *I*, ſaith

the Lord, *would put my hook in thy noſe, and my bridle in thy lips.*

Ye friends of government alſo draw near, and turn your eyes from thoſe you ſuſpect to be the only authors of the preſent evil, look in this glaſs and ſee the ugly monſter *univerſal ſin*, that ſubtle, unſuſpected ſerpent that has inflamed our blood, and brought on the malignant fever of contention on our body. Here gaze till its loathſome and hideous deformity makes you loath her. Then you will not marvel, that when the divine reſtraint is with-held, we are capable of any thing: even that which is the moſt likely to end in our preſent and eternal ruin!——And ſhould not ye, Oh! ye *Americans*, ye unhappy ſufferers by this dreadful fire, look into the ſame glaſs, and not marvel at a divine permiſſion of your afflictions; but in a becoming ſpirit and diſpoſition aſk, *Wherefore doſt thou contend with me? Why hideſt thou thy face, and holdeſt me for thine enemy? Why haſt thou ſet me as a mark againſt thee?* Surely then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people!

But is our *univerſal* impiety the firſt and principal cauſe of our miſery and wretchedneſs in general, and of the *preſent* diſtreſs in particular. Then let no individual attempt to clear himſelf from the dreadful charge of being acceſſary to it. Let no one preſume to look on himſelf as unconcerned and innocent. Let no one *wipe his mouth and ſay, what harm have I done?* But rather let him know that *his* ſin in particular [illegible] added to the general account, and not a little contributed to the fierceneſs of the divine contention.

tion? I ſay divine contention; and ſuch doubtleſs it is, tho' in general we conceive it merely human. But the latter is the effect only of the former, and ſhould never be forgotten. It demands our firſt and moſt ſerious attention, being the firſt and principal means of reſtoring the wiſhed-for peace, and greatly deſired reconciliation. For this is no other, than to make God himſelf our friend: and, *if he be for us, who can be againſt us!* Let us do this therefore without delay. Let every one remember his *own* ſin and *not* his neighbours.

Let us follow the example of the Ninevites. Let us *break off our ſins by repentance.* Let us *obſerve ſuch a faſt as God hath choſen.* (And, oh! what need of a national faſt at this juncture.) *Let the prieſts, the miniſters of the Lord weep between the porch and the altar, and let them ſay ſpare* (not deſtroy) *thy people, O Lord*; and *give not thine heritage to reproach, that the Heathen ſhould rule over them, and ſay where is their God? Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people.* But ſhould this ſpirit of univerſal humiliation fail, and conſequently the divine favour upon our land. Let not the *ſeed of Abraham* faint, neither let them be diſmayed. Their humiliation and interceſſion ſhall be remembered. It cannot be forgotten: and, if *Sodom* is not ſpared for their ſake, they themſelves ſhall nevertheleſs be ſpared, *as a man ſpareth his own ſon that ſerveth him:* God *will make a difference between him that ſerveth him, and him that ſerveth him not.* "Strong is his arm and ſhall fulfil, his great decree, and ſovereign will." *Fear not* therefore ye *little flock* if the *overflowing ſcourge* ſhould

ſhould come. But *enter ye into the rock, and hide ye for a little moment in the duſt, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his Majeſty, until the indignation be overpaſt. For behold! the Lord cometh out of his place to puniſh the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth alſo ſhall diſcloſe her blood, and ſhall no more cover her ſlain!*

THE END